# *Malaria*

The conservation state of the painting *Malaria* before the restoration intervention presented several critical issues.

The wooden stretcher no longer preserved the corner expansion devices, the so-called "wedges", and its extensible functionality was hindered by large nails that blocked the crossbars. The fabric support showed several undulations at the corners due to improper tensioning of the canvas. On the back, the presence of "patches" evidenced previous tears.

On the front, the painted surface displayed numerous vertical cracks, possibly caused by the canvas having been rolled for easier transport. A thick and synthetic varnish, which altered in time, had completely obscured many of the details and nullified the chromatic relationships. The palette was revealed to be rich in the use of umber, arsenic green and chrome green, ochres, cinnabar, vegetable black and/or bone black, "bianco di San Giovanni", Prussian blue, and other organic pigments on an extremely thin preparatory layer composed of biacca and yellow ochre, and "bianco di San Giovanni". Various gaps and numerous altered retouches were also evident.



The methodological approach initially included image analyses carried out by the Cabinet of Scientific Research applied to Cultural Heritage of the Vatican Museums, in order to define the conservation state, study the constituent materials, the execution technique, and any pictorial changes compared to the visible image. It was thus possible to highlight some "revisions": the thumb of the boy's right hand, the volume of the cushion, and the repositioning of the strings of the coral necklace.

The cleaning process required a differentiated method according to the non-pertinent substance to be removed. The restored colour tone revealed a realistic work, endowed with strong plastic evidence. Previously unreadable details emerged, such as the blue jacket with gold buttons, the leather boots and a hearth on the left, the dry-stones of the wall in the background.

After cleaning, the support was treated with alternating warm and humid cycles to rehydrate the textile fibres, also using the low-pressure table. The intervention aimed to eliminate the undulation defects and the vertical cracks that over time could cause the lifting of the paint layer. Where there were

losses of the entire preparation-colour stratigraphic portion, the area was treated with appropriate *stucco* fillings and then chromatically reintegrated.

The final varnishing took into consideration the protective function of the colour, improving its optical characteristics using a varnish with high chemical-physical resistance, reversibility, and optimal optical properties, while being also resistant to UV. The homogeneous film was applied by aerosol in a varnishing booth.